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JOINT RAPID REACTION FORCES:
CINCPAC EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

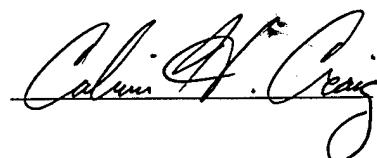
by

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is quickly shaping up to be the "Pacific Century". The nations comprising the Pacific Ocean rim are growing into the largest trading and economic bloc in the world. With this increase in economic clout comes increased nationalism, territorial disputes, and destabilizing arms races. In spite of the growing need for a stabilizing influence, the U.S. has been slowly withdrawing from the region. CINCPAC must have an ever increasing array of options available to maintain U.S. presence and rapid crisis response in the region. What is needed in PACOM for today and the 21st century are Joint Rapid Reaction Forces (JRRFs) that join together the attributes of naval and air power to deliver the quickest and most capable tailored responses to crisis situations running the gamut from humanitarian assistance to regional conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

The East Asia-Pacific region is growing economically and militarily faster than any other region in the world. During the 21st century it is expected to become an even larger market for American goods and services. The region also occupies a key geostrategic position that has become even more important in an increasingly industrialized world economy dependent upon free trade and unimpeded market access. With this newly acquired wealth comes new challenges to the region's security. It is vital that America remain engaged both diplomatically and militarily in the region to ensure that peace and stability continue to prevail into the next century.

The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (USCINCPAC) is charged with carrying out the nation's military strategy in this region. In light of increasingly reduced presence in the region and declining defense budgets, CINCPAC will have to rely on a combination of innovative forward presence concepts and CONUS based forces in order to carry out his mission.

This paper proposes operational options that will allow CINCPAC to continue its stabilizing influence in the region well into the 21st century. These employment options are in line with Joint Vision 2010 concepts designed to ensure economy of force in U.S. crisis response and prevention.

Chapter I

REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCERNS

The East Asia-Pacific region is of growing importance to the United States as the world approaches the next millennium - one that has been predicted to truly be the "Pacific Century." The region is comprised of the nations of Japan, Russia, China, Taiwan, North and South Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar and Australia. In terms of vital interests, the United States has key economic, diplomatic, and militarily significant ties to the region that directly impact the stated National Security Strategy goals of economic prosperity and a stable and secure world.

The East Asia-Pacific region is home to over half of the world's income and the largest consumer market in the world.¹ Singapore - an island nation of only 3 million people is expected to be the seventh richest country in the world by 1999.² But what is especially impressive about the region is the rate of economic growth witnessed in recent years. While the rest of the world has averaged growth rates (as measured in GNP) under 1% in the past fifteen years, the East Asia-Pacific region has averaged rates over 6%, with China leading the way at over 8%. In fact, China has the fastest growing economy in the world as its GNP is doubling every ten years.³

In matters directly related to the U.S., the region accounts for over 60% of U.S. merchandise exports and over three million American jobs. In terms of two-way trade, the region has already doubled that of Europe 37% to 18%.⁴ This remarkable economic

growth is expected to continue well into the next century, further enhancing the region's ability to shape world events through the exertion of political and economic influence.⁵

Diplomatically the region is home to five of the seven nations that have formal security treaties with the United States: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines, and Thailand. In addition to these formal agreements, the U.S. has a variety of other bilateral relationships that include access arrangements, military to military exchanges and exercises. While the U.S. has found that these bilateral relationships suit the region well due to the diverse nature of the countries involved and their widely varied threat perceptions, multilateral ties are also being actively pursued. Recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forums (of which the U.S. is a member) have been held in the U.S. to emphasize our close economic ties with the nations of the Pacific rim. The U.S. plays a key role (mainly through its bilateral ties) in new multilateral mechanisms such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its security component, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Thus far however, these organizations have proved somewhat ineffective in settling regional disputes. During the 1996 Asia Pacific Roundtable conference, Canada's Professor Paul Evans emphasized that widely held opinion:

"Getting the countries in the Asia-Pacific region to think in the same direction is a formidable task. The current wisdom has it that any such (Pacific) concord, treaty, or agreement is simply unachievable in a region that is so large and diverse."⁶

Without strong U.S. involvement and interaction in regional security issues, many of the region's leaders feel that increased nationalism spurred by newly acquired wealth could lead to conflict. Recently, the Prime Minister for Defence of Singapore, Dr. Tony Tan

reiterated the need for the United States to act as the region's honest broker and security guarantor:

"With continued US presence and participation, all Asia-Pacific countries can keep their energies focused on economic development and cooperation instead of being distracted by any regional imbalance and rivalry."⁷

Militarily, the region is significant to the U.S. in that it has: a world power (U.S.), one that was and could be so again (Russia), one that could be anytime it wants (Japan), one that could be within the next 10-15 years (China), and two that could be in the next 25 years (a reunified Korea and Indonesia). The region is also home to two nuclear powers China and Russia), one maybe (North Korea), and one that could be easily (Japan). Rarely in history have such shifts in power brought about by economic prosperity occurred without a clash of arms. The larger security issues for the 21st century involve the major power brokers in the Northeast Asia region - China, Taiwan, Japan, North and South Korea, Russia to a degree, and the U.S.

The potential for crisis looms largest at the present time on the Korean peninsula, where North Korea's isolation from the rest of the world has placed it on the constant verge of explosion or implosion. Their attempts to acquire a nuclear capability have further destabilized the region, although North Korea's disintegration (in whatever form it might happen) is largely considered to be pre-ordained by the beginning of the next century. Already Korean military planners appear to be basing their strategic and force development plans for the next century on a reunified peninsula and an almost certain withdrawal of U.S. troops from their country.⁸

The most critical of uncertainties for the future are found in China. That country's military and population are by far the largest in the region, estimated at 2.3 million and 1.2 billion respectively.⁹ Its military has demonstrated its willingness on multiple occasions in the past few years to use demonstrative force, most notably against an increasingly assertive Taiwan. Territorial disputes along its borders and in the South China Sea have all increased fears of China's regional ambitions. Trade disputes with other nations, especially the U.S., have twice in the past two years brought China to the brink of major trade wars. Along with the uncertainty in their nuclear weapons testing process, all of the above factors point towards China as the greatest threat to regional stability for the next 5-20 years.

Another concern involves Japan's increased role in regional security affairs. The historical animosity with (a possibly reunified) Korea, continuing territorial disputes with Russia, and worries over China's intentions within the region have led Japan to better prepare itself militarily. Coupled with a growing lack of confidence in, or the need for, the U.S. to fulfill its role as the regional policeman, these security concerns have led to unprecedented levels of Japanese activism and assertiveness in the region.¹⁰ Following the recent furor over the Okinawa rape incident, increasing protests over property rights at other U.S. installations in Japan further highlight the growing disdain that the Japanese people have with foreign forces on their soil.¹¹

Yet another major concern for many nations in the East Asia-Pacific region involves weapons procurement. Fueled by the above-mentioned economic prosperity, the means and opportunity to buy and modernize weapons inventories has led to what some

say is a growing regional arms race. One nation rearms and/or modernizes its equipment and forces, followed by another's desire to maintain parity - soon the region is engulfed in weapons procurement and manufacturing. Between 1980 and 1995, the region's nations increased their share of the world's arms imports from 15% to over 40%, and their total defense expenditures by one-third. This is in marked contrast to the rest of the world, which has seen a decline in defense expenditures averaging over 25%.¹²

These newly armed regional defense forces have also become more externally oriented and focused on power projection. For example, the entire South China Sea is projected to be (by 2010) within range of land based anti-ship and cruise missiles from surrounding countries.¹³ With one-half of the world's shipping passing through Southeast Asian sea lines of communications (SLOCs), even the threat of force in this vital area (or an increase in piracy as has been seen in the past few years) can cause shipping insurance rates to rise and adversely affect markets worldwide.¹⁴

Other concerns and transnational threats within the region include: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), energy and resource shortages, terrorism, drug trafficking, and unwanted immigration. In short, the East Asia-Pacific region is undergoing a period of tremendous change, the effects of which will be felt well into the next century. One area expert emphasized the criticality of the region's role in a peaceful future:

“While civil wars and ethnic strife will continue to smolder for some time along Europe's peripheries, in the long run it is Asia that seems far more likely to be the cockpit of great power conflict.”¹⁵

As the security environment in the region grows increasingly uncertain, the U.S. has been sending mixed signals diplomatically and militarily. In a land where a steady hand at the tiller is valued most, U.S. leadership and resolve have been undermined by actions that belie the current strategic rhetoric of engagement and alliance. The recent withdrawal of the U.S. from certain bases in Okinawa is largely symbolic in terms of military preparedness; but it underscores a growing fear among many nations that the U.S. is not truly committed to the region. In a recent editorial in the Far Eastern Economic Review, this incident was underscored with an analogy:

“When it comes to love, husbands and wives know that loud declarations of fidelity can be more unsettling than outright evidence of unfaithfulness. The same holds true in international relations.”¹⁶

Chapter II

CINCPAC STRATEGY FOR THE 21st CENTURY

CINCPAC is responsible for an area that covers half of the world's surface and two-thirds of its population.¹⁷ U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) is tasked with operations that range from humanitarian assistance to major regional conflict in support of the National Military Strategy goal of flexible and selective engagement. In the Pacific area of responsibility (AOR), U.S. forces are involved in carrying out this policy by remaining constructively engaged in peacetime; acting to deter aggression and prevent conflict; and fighting and winning our Nation's wars when called upon.¹⁸ In addition, CINCPAC is responsible for the promotion of U.S. interests along diplomatic and political fronts that demonstrate the nation's commitment to remain actively engaged in this vital region.

The Future Environment

The 21st century will bring with it tough challenges for the Pacific commander as many of the last vestiges of our nation's post-Cold War defense structure will have been altered or eliminated. This process is ongoing as evidenced by declining defense budgets, force reduction, and withdrawal from overseas bases in face of increased U.S. isolationism and waning host nation support. This trend is expected to continue into the next century.

Most experts agree that U.S. defense spending will not increase in the foreseeable future after having fallen from 6.7% of GNP in 1983 to less than 4 % in 1995.¹⁹ At the same time, today's forces are conducting more operations of greater duration than in the the past 20 years, along with 40% fewer forward deployed forces than in 1989. With this smaller force structure and declining budgets, the U.S. can no longer afford to physically deploy forces to every region of concern.²⁰ Although US troop levels have remained fairly constant in the Pacific at 100,000 troops, that figure is being reviewed for the upcoming 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review.²¹ This latest hint at retrenchment will only further the growing doubt as to U.S. political will in support of regional security.

As the dollars decline and the troops are reduced, the overseas basing infrastructure will undoubtedly be further scaled back. After Korean reunification, U.S. forces will either leave on their own or be asked to depart. The last U.S. significant forward deployed ground forces in Japan will also be sent home, although a small force may stay behind in a "tripwire" role for the region. Instead of focusing on "in light of these cuts, we can't carry out our mission," the challenge is to enhance our warfighting capability by devising new strategies that take advantage of the combination of new technology, joint forces integration, and new operational concepts.

The New Strategy

The U.S. should in no way retreat from its commitments in the East Asia-Pacific region. CINCPAC must therefore remain engaged in this vital region by focusing on a more immediate reconsideration of the current presence strategy, coupled with a long

term plan for the future. This long term outlook will pay off in two ways. First, it will lay the foundation for increased U.S. access to the region in the 21st century; and second, it will provide reassurance to our allies that we are committed to security in the region for the long term, a view more in tune with the Asian way of life.

This presence mission can be accomplished even with the coming reduction in force structure through allied and joint force exercises, negotiated access agreements and/or country visits, and increased military to military exchanges. America's future threats have undoubtedly taken to heart many lessons learned from the Gulf War and should be expected to deny us the preparation time and base of operations within the region from which we could strike. At the same time, new military technology is being introduced that will lead to a lesser emphasis upon fixed U.S. bases on Asian soil. The new operational emphasis should be upon rapid deployment, precision engagement, lift capacity, focused logistics, mobile area defense, and force integration.

Chapter III

CINCPAC FORCE EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

Force Suitability

A quick glance at the map will confirm two salient characteristics about the East Asia-Pacific theater and CINCPAC's AOR. First, it is largely a maritime theater in that all of the nations within the region have large areas of coastline and are predominantly populated near the ocean. Second, it is an extremely vast theater that encompasses over 100 million square miles, most of whose countries are thousands of miles away from the continental U.S. For those two reasons and others, naval (including U.S. Marine) and air forces are the best options for tailored crisis response within the theater. These forces could easily be combined if necessary, with rapidly deployable U.S. Army forces. This option for the future is echoed by the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia and Pacific Affairs:

“With a change in the Pyongyang regime or reunification on the peninsula, Washington should expect to further reduce its forces in Northeast Asia. Given a reluctance to fight another conflict on the Asian mainland, efforts should be made to maintain U.S. air and naval presence with limited though highly mobile ground forces.”²²

Naval forces (including carrier air and U.S. Marines) are extremely well suited to, and ingrained in the region due to their long history of demonstrated U.S. commitment through forward presence and allied operations. They require little host nation support, making them acceptable in a region that values “less footprint” with regard to foreign forces. Yet they are quite flexible in that they can offer nearly unlimited presence in a sea

control role and a very visible manifestation of national military capability. The main drawback to naval forces involves the time necessary to arrive in theater if not already forward deployed. Another potential shortcoming is a lack of sustained firepower in situations that require substantial inland power projection.

Air forces can offer extremely rapid, and tailored response to anywhere in the theater. With forward bases they can deliver firepower for extended periods of time. Air forces are also popular and many times welcome within the region as many countries are currently upgrading their aircraft inventories.²³ Shortfalls occur when forward basing becomes a problem in situations where continued and substantial air support is needed.

What is needed in PACOM for today and the 21st century are employment options that join together the attributes of both forces, in order to deliver the quickest and most capable tailored response to crisis situations running the gamut from humanitarian assistance to lesser regional conflicts. Joint Rapid Reaction Forces (JRRFs) offer such a solution.

Joint Rapid Reaction Force Concept

Basically, the JRRF is a tailored combination of naval expeditionary forces (NEFs) and composite air expeditionary forces (AEFs). Airborne deployable ground troops could be added to the package if necessary. Although the Air Force has successfully deployed both composite air wings and air expeditionary forces, they have yet to truly integrate them in order to take advantage of the synergism they would offer for quick, tailored crisis response. Composite air expeditionary forces would do just that.

A JRRF can range in size from a small surface action group (SAG) combined with a squadron of F-16's to a carrier battle group (CVBG) / amphibious ready group (ARG) deployed with an entire composite AEF. Although the ARG contains substantial ground forces, JRRFs could easily be tasked to only provide air and sea cover and firepower in support of host nation ground forces, eliminating the need for deployment of U.S. ground troops on foreign soil. In cases where troops on the ground are required, Marines from the ARG or airborne Army forces would provide enough firepower for the particular situation.

JRRFs could be designated and formed according to the size of the response necessary for a variety of contingencies. For example, JRRF "Alpha" would be tailored for host nation insurgency response and would train for that mission (and others) both in CONUS and in theater. JRRF "Alpha" could then be assimilated into a larger force if needed. Similar to the Mission Capability Package (MCP) and the small expeditionary force concepts, the JRRF takes these concepts one step further by combining the operational concepts of Joint Vision 2010 with tailored crisis response and training.²⁴²⁵ The JRRF would provide the CINC with a jointly trained and commanded warfighting response team within hours to any crisis in the AOR.

JRRF Operational Concepts

Joint Rapid Reaction Forces train and deploy based on the Joint Vision 2010 tenants of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection, and focused logistics.²⁶ They are designed to match the right combination of capabilities to

achieve the desired objective. They are relatively lightweight, high-tech, go-anywhere forces that will indeed combine 21st century technology with new organization and employment doctrine.

Dominant maneuver is based on agile, fast moving joint operations combining air, land, and maritime forces more effectively to deliver decisive combat power. Within that framework, rapid mobility, including airlift with its timely response and sealift with its volume capability, is especially critical in the PACOM AOR. For this reason, CINCPAC should continue to encourage and train with host nations for airfield and port facilities support. The U.S. Air Force's Rapid Global Mobility concept of "anything, anytime, anywhere" meshes nicely with JRRF deployment.²⁷ One example of dominant maneuver would tie mobility and supply efforts with battlefield prep by asking large aircraft (protected by air or sea assets) to scatter mines ahead of an advancing enemy. This could delay the enemy and possibly allow friendly forces more time to build-up or even reduce in number.²⁸

Precision engagement not only includes firepower employment principles, but command and control as well. CINCPAC's two-tiered command and control structure with the Joint Task Force (JTF) commander reporting directly to the CINC fits well into the JRRF concept. Additionally, CINCPAC's Deployable Joint Task Force Augmentation Cells (DJTFACs), made up of specific mission tailored communication and intelligence specialists are exactly what is needed to enhance command and control of JRRFs.²⁹

Full dimensional protection, designed to ensure freedom of action and multi-layered force defense, would be enhanced by the JRRF concept due to its inherent joint force structure that could provide situational awareness and battlespace dominance from a variety of platforms. For example, Aegis lower tier area defense could provide protection against ballistic missiles aimed at expeditionary airfields.

Finally, JRRFs will rely on focused logistics in order to travel quicker and lighter to the battle. Desert Storm proved that we are too heavy and carry too much “stuff” to battle - what is needed is speed of deployment and less reliance on layered supplies. Focused logistics are designed to reduce the logistics response time, infrastructure, and “footprint”. The concept is based on a “Fed-Ex” type system where, instead of relying on vulnerable pre-positioned supplies (prepo) either afloat or ashore, fast transportation and total asset visibility provide needed logistics support hours after being requested.³⁰

Training

JRRF training would take place both in CONUS and overseas if able. CINCPAC (in concert with the other regional CINCs) would be responsible for determining and integrating training requirements into the joint forces integrated training list (JFITL). Allied exercises would be encouraged at all levels in order to maximize visibility and familiarity within the region. PACOM has already begun an ambitious program of training and exercises in support of bilateral as well as multilateral agreements. It should continue this incremental, allied training approach that allows countries within the region to proceed at their own pace.³¹ In circumstances where forces are unable to deploy,

enhanced modeling and battlefield simulation connected via a global web would allow JRRFs to experience near-real-time training and decision making.³²

Chapter IV

JRRF ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

Joint Rapid Reaction Forces consist of integrated, tailored forces designed to achieve unity of effort through effective command and control. They respond quickly in order to maintain a high optempo while arriving at the crisis from different avenues of approach. Their whole focus consists of applying the right amount of force at the right place at the right time. And they are particularly suited for PACOM because of the time, space, and force relationships inherent to this AOR.

There are of course counter-arguments that could be made. Some would say that this is not a particularly innovative or novel approach in that it is similar to the somewhat controversial adaptive force packaging concept championed by U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM). There are similarities with the tailored aspect of the JRRF, but the focus on quick response, lightweight support, and regional CINC driven training highlight the differences in the two approaches.

Others have argued that the U.S. no longer needs to remain engaged in the region because economics is of prime importance and is responsible for the relative stability that the region has enjoyed lately. However, this argument fails to convince because looking at both Singapore and Japan, there are two extremely strong economies, yet neither one feels particularly secure. Both are clearly willing to state that their security requires forward US military presence. The true measure must be that economic growth enhances security but is, by itself, no guarantee of safety.³³

Finally, it has been put forth that U.S. forward presence is not necessary because it is wasteful and outbreaks of regional instability are insignificant enough not to warrant US intervention. The best answer to this is provided jointly (of course) by the current Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps:

“The answer is that we can’t afford not to be there. Presence in the Pacific is what prevents these things from happening in the first place and from getting out of hand. The concept must be one of selected and committed engagement, unencumbered global ops and prompt crisis resolution.”³⁴

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